

## Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 TUNIS 05458 021307Z

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10

NSAE-00 PA-01 ICA-11 SP-02 /047 W

-----046024 030714Z /11

R 021202Z AUG 78

FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2019

INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

C O N F I D E N T I A L TUNIS 5458

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR TS

SUBJ: HASSEN BELKHODJA DISCUSSES RECOGNITION OF  
SOCIAL DEMOCRATS

1. SUMMARY: MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE HASSEN BELKHODJA INVITED MY WIFE AND ME ON AUGUST 1 TO A LONG LEISURELY AFTERNOON FOR LUNCH AND SWIMMING AT HIS FAMILY HOMESTEAD ON THE SHORE AT RAS DJEBEL NEAR BIZERTE, HIS POLITICAL FIEF. I TOOK THE OCCASION WHEN WE WERE ALONE TO PROVOKE HIM INTO A DISCUSSION OF ONE OF THE CHIEF CURRENT ISSUES OF POLITICAL IMPORTANCE IN TUNISIA TODAY, THE FATE OF THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS' APPLICATION OF JUNE 14 TO BE REGISTERED AS A POLITICAL PARTY. END SUMMARY.

2. I TOLD BELKHODJA THAT I ASSUMED FROM THE RECENT WEEKEND SPEAKING TOURS OF THE DESTOURIAN LEADERS IN THE PROVINCES THAT THE POLITICAL BUREAU HAD PROBABLY DECIDED AGAINST GRANTING RECOGNITION TO THE MOVEMENT OF SOCILA DEMOCRATS (MDS). THE MINISTER AVOIDED GIVING ME A "YES" OR A "NO", INSTEAD HE SAID, "BUT THEY ARE NOT RPT NOT A POLITICAL PARTY. THEY HAVE NO FOLLOWING. THEY HAVE NO PROGRAM.  
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 TUNIS 05458 021307Z

IF THEY WERE A SERIOUS PARTY, WE COULD TAKE THEM MORE SERIOUSLY." HE THEN TICKED OFF SOME OF THE STATED OBJECTIVES OF THE MDS IN THE ECONOMIC FIELD WHICH, HE CLAIMED, WERE MERE PARAPHRASES OF LONG-ESTABLISHED PSD GOALS. AS OF NOW, HE SIAD, THEY ARE WHAT THEY HAVE BEEN FOR THE PAST YEAR, "A TINY GROUP OF TUNISOIS LAWYERS AND PROFESSORS WHO HAVE FAILED TO ATTRACT ANY SUPPORT OF CONSEQUENCE".

3. I TOLD BELHODJA THAT, NEVERTHELESS, IT WAS MY UNDER-  
STANDING THAT UNDER THE CONSTITUTION IT WOULD BE HARD TO  
DENY RECOGNITION TO THE MDS OR ANY OTHER GROUP WHO WISHED  
TO FUNCTION AS A PARTY. HE SEEMED PUZZLED AT MY REMARK AND  
NOT TO HAVE THOUGHT OF THE ISSUE AS A CONSTITUTIONAL ONE,  
BUT HE AGREED THERE WAS NO LEGAL HINDRANCE TO THE FORMATION  
OF ANY POLITICAL PARTY BY ANY GROUP EXCEPT THE COMMUNISTS  
(OUTLAWED IN 1963), YET HE CONTENDED THAT THE NATIONAL  
INTEREST SHOULD REQUIRE THAT NOT JUST ANY GROUP BE ALLOWED  
TO CALL ITSELF A PARTY. THERE SHOULD BE SOME REQUIRED PROOF  
THAT TH ORGANIZERS DEMONSTRATE THAT THEY HAVE THE NATIONAL  
INTEREST AT HEART, ARE NOT SUPPORTED BY FOREIGN SOURCES  
AND HAVE A VIABLE STRUCTURE, A SUBSTANTIAL MEMBERSHIP  
AND A PLATFORM. HE ASKED ME WHETHER I HAD SPOKEN WITH  
ANY MDS PERSONALITIES LATELY. I TOLD HIM I HAD HAD HALF  
A DOZEN SESSIONS OVER THE PAST SEVEN OR EIGHT MONTHS WITH  
AHMED MESTIRI AND OTHER MDS LEADERS, ONE AS RECENTLY AS  
TWO OR THREE WEEKS AGO. DID I BELIEVE THEY HAD ANY SUB-  
STANTIAL FOLLOWING, HE THEN ASKED. I SAID THAT, TO BE  
PERFECTLY HONEST, I WOULD HAVE TO CONFESS THAT MDS SUPPORT  
DID NOT SEEM TO ME TO BE VERY SUBSTANTIAL AND SEEMED  
CHIEFLY CONFINED TO THE TUNIS AREA. I FELT, HOWEVER, THAT  
IN TIME THE MDS' TWO NEWSPAPERS MIGHT WELL ATTRACT A WIDER  
FOLLOWING FOR THEM AND THAT TIME WOULD TELL. "EH, VOILA\*",  
HE EXPLAINED, "THAT'S PRECISELY MY POINT." WE THEN PASSED  
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 TUNIS 05458 021307Z

TO OTHER TOPICS OF CURRENT INTEREST BEING REPORTED (NOTAL)  
IN SEPTELS.

4. COMMENT: FROM THIS REGRETTABLY INCONCLUSIVE EXCHANGE  
I DISTILLED A FEELING THAT NO FINAL DECISION HAS BEEN  
REACHED YET BY THE DESTOURIAN LEADERSHIP ON THE RECOGNITION  
OF THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS AS A POLITICAL PARTY. BELKHODJA,  
WHO HAS ALWAYS DISPLAYED A KNACK FOR BEING ON THE WINNING  
SIDE OF INTR-PARTY CONTROVERSIES, SEEMS PERSONALLY TO LEAN  
AGAINST RECOGNITION BUT, CHARACTERISITCALLY, LEAVES HIMSELF  
AN "OUT" AND WILL WAIT TO SEE HOW THE WIND BLOWS,  
PARTICULARLY AFTER THE PRESIDENT RETURNS TO TUNIS FROM  
PARIS TOWARD THE END OF THIS MONTH.  
MULCAHY

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN



## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 jan 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** RECOGNITION, SOCIAL DEMOCRATS  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 02 aug 1978  
**Decaption Date:** 01 jan 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 20 Mar 2014  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1978TUNIS05458  
**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** GS  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Expiration:**  
**Film Number:** D780317-1052  
**Format:** TEL  
**From:** TUNIS  
**Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Image Path:**  
**ISecure:** 1  
**Legacy Key:** link1978/newtext/t197808105/aaaadkco.tel  
**Line Count:** 108  
**Litigation Code IDs:**  
**Litigation Codes:**  
**Litigation History:**  
**Locator:** TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM  
**Message ID:** 242c0358-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc  
**Office:** ACTION NEA  
**Original Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Page Count:** 2  
**Previous Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Previous Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Reference:** n/a  
**Retention:** 0  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 05 jul 2005  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**SAS ID:** 1554922  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** HASSEN BELKHODJA DISCUSSES RECOGNITION OF SOCIAL DEMOCRATS  
**TAGS:** PFOR, PINT, TS, (BELKHODJA, HASSEN)  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**vdkgvwkey:** odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS\_Docs/242c0358-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc  
**Review Markings:**  
Sheryl P. Walter  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
20 Mar 2014  
**Markings:** Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014